

****ATTENTION****

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Department of Wildlife
N. 8702 Division Street
Spokane, WA 99218

SULLIVAN LAKE BIGHORN SHEEP WINTER FEEDING STATION



Washington Department of Wildlife
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service



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This winter feeding station for bighorn sheep is operated by the Washington Department of Wildlife on public land managed by the Sullivan Lake District of the Colville National Forest (U.S.D.A. Forest Service) at the south end of Sullivan Lake near Noisy Creek in Pend Oreille County.

You are welcome to visit the site to view the sheep, but your visit will be more enjoyable and safer if you read this information first.

Conditions

The sheep are usually on site after the feeding program begins in early December and usually remain in the area until the feeding ends in late February. There is no guarantee that you will see the animals, however, extended periods of very cold weather are the best times to look for them at the feeders. This is a season of heavy snow, ice, and very cold temperatures in the

Sullivan Lake area. County road crews plow the road into a limited parking area near the site when their busy schedule permits, but unplowed snow and ice are common. No public vehicles are allowed right at the feed station, so you must walk 1/4 mile from the parking area to see the sheep. This walk is all uphill on compact snow that is sometimes icy, so warm, traction boots are important. The hike up will warm you, but once at the feed station you'll want warm clothes to avoid chilling while quietly watching the sheep.

Remember that these sheep are wild animals. They appear quite tame, and can be approached rather closely, but sudden movements, loud noises, dogs or playing children will frighten them out of view or could result in a sheep injuring a person. Please try to view them with minimal disturbance so the sheep are less stressed and so that others can enjoy them.

History and Management

Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis canadensis*) are believed to have been in this area until about 1900 when unregulated market hunting or disease eliminated the herd.

In 1972 the Washington Department of Wildlife released 18 Rocky Mountain bighorns, here, captured at Watagon Lakes National Park in Alberta, Canada, as part of an on going, state-wide effort to re-establish the animals on their native range. The department now manages this herd of about 60 animals as a source of transplants to other areas; between 1977 and 1986, for example, about 40 sheep were transplanted to the Blue Mountains of southeast Washington.

About a dozen animals have also been moved to pastures at Washington State University where wildlife disease specialists can study them more closely. Wild sheep are very susceptible to domestic livestock diseases, so this work may be important beyond this herd. The

study has already resulted in improved disease treatment and the new herd provides additional transplanting and viewing opportunities.

Some of the sheep at the feed station are trapped each winter and the knowledge gained at WSU is put into practice — they are tested for various diseases, internal parasite levels are monitored and medication is added to their food as needed. The animals are tagged before release to help document summer distribution, age, reproduction and mortality rates.

Feeding

These sheep could do quite well on much less artificial feed, but the extra feed keeps them available for trapping needs and viewing enjoyment. Hay is usually available at all times, at a rate of about 12 bales a week. A feed concentrate in pellet form is also supplied once a week. The sheep consume the weekly ration of about 1,200 pounds of pellets in just a few days, so don't be concerned if you find the pellet feeders empty. Care must be taken to not over-feed with this high-protein concentrate.

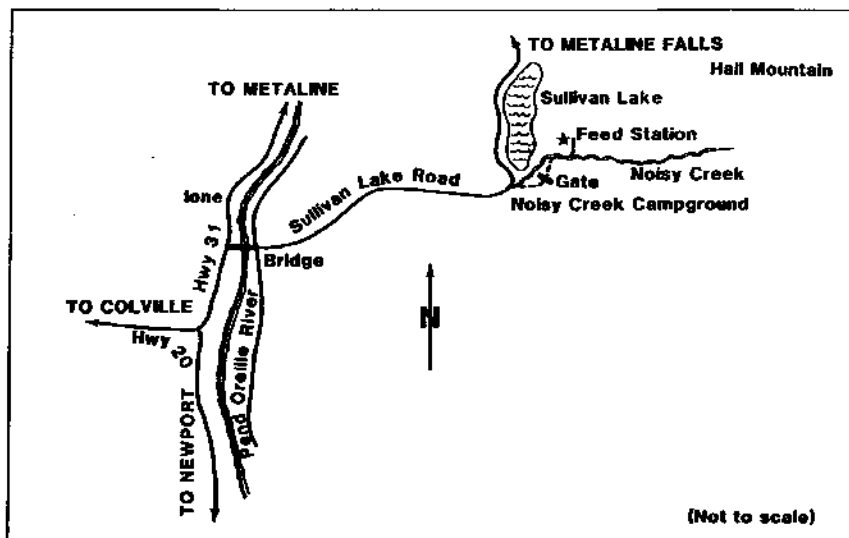
As the weather warms in February, the feed ration is cut to encourage the sheep to begin the transition back to natural forage. The sheep spend less and less time at the feeder each day. Depending on the weather, they may leave the area entirely by early March.

Life History

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Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep are the largest sheep in North America. Rams reach over 300 pounds. Horns of old rams weigh up to 30 pounds. Rams live about 12 years, ewes slightly longer.

Rams often fight by clashing horns in the fall or winter to determine or maintain dominance in a herd. Breeding is in November. Lambs are born on the steep face of



Hall Mountain, above Sullivan Lake, in May. Most sheep move northeast to Crowell Ridge and travel as far as Canada for summer range. Although most sheep return to the feeder each winter, a few have remained in Canada.

Directions to Feed Station

The feed station is about 80 miles northeast of Spokane. Follow Highway 20 north from Newport or east from Colville to Highway 31 and the vicinity of Lone. Just south of Lone, cross the bridge over the Pend Oreille River to the east and continue up the hill on the Sullivan Lake Road about eight miles. Turn off to the east on the Noisy Creek campground road near the south end of the lake. You can usually park in the area near the closed gate across the road that leads to the feed station. Please try to leave room for other vehicles to pass or for official vehicles to get into the feed station.